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Chairman: Mr. Zacheo ..... (Cyprus)
later: Mr. Kazhura ..... (Belarus)

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00-32802 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 91: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/54/21 and Add.1 and A/54/415)

1. **Mr. Al-Bader** (Kuwait) endorsed the statements made on behalf of the Arab Group and the Group of 77 and China and said that he welcomed the work of the Department of Public Information (DPI), which consisted of publicizing the work of the United Nations and seeking to reduce the continuing technological inequality between developing and developed countries in the information field. In order to be ready to adapt to the changes that would come in the twenty-first century, the Department would need to propose an innovative information policy, and Kuwait invited it to take advantage of the Millennium Assembly to prepare world public opinion to that end.

2. He noted with satisfaction that the Department had made every effort to take advantage of the new technologies, particularly the Internet. He supported the view that the number of United Nations Web sites must be increased and the Arabic site further developed. It was important for Member States to increase their financial contributions so that the Department would have the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate and adapt its policies to the rapid evolution of information technologies. It was also necessary for Member States to open up the information channels that they controlled in order to enable information to circulate freely.

3. He supported the request that the Department should endeavour to meet the interests of the developing countries so that they could acquire new information technologies; the special information programme on the question of Palestine should be implemented in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Department should also devote more attention to promoting public awareness of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

4. **Mr. Ri Kwang Nam** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that despite the intense work of the Committee on Information since its establishment 20 years earlier, there was increasing marginalization of the developing countries in the information and communications field. Only countries which possessed modern science and technology benefited from information technologies.

5. The use of information to violate the sovereignty of other countries and to intervene in their internal affairs could not be tolerated. The United Nations should seek to ensure that information served to strengthen ties of friendship and cooperation among States and to promote sustainable development. Those objectives could be achieved only if a new, more equitable and effective world information and communications order was established, as indicated in the report of the Committee on Information (A/54/21 and Add.1). A cornerstone of that new order should be respect for the sovereignty of each country and non-interference in the internal affairs of each State. The international community must not permit certain countries which monopolized modern communication media to use them to impose their own ideology and cultural values.

6. Secondly, the new order should strengthen the information capacity of the developing countries with United Nations assistance. The organizations of the system should assist in modernizing the information infrastructure of those countries through a more generous distribution of resources, the transfer of advanced technology and the training of directors and technicians so that the developing countries could promote economic development and progress in education and culture.

7. Thirdly, United Nations information activities should be objective, impartial and directed to all Member States in accordance with the universality of the United Nations. His delegation considered that United Nations information practices manifested partiality by devoting a lot of attention to big countries while neglecting small countries; they exaggerated the problems of weak countries and ignored those of the major Powers. The Organization would continue to inspire confidence only if it showed itself to be impartial and objective in its information activities.

8. **Mr. Dorjsuren** (Mongolia) supported the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He drew attention to the indisputable advantages of technological progress in information and telecommunications (dissemination of information in real time, digitization, easy access to cyberspace) and stressed that the disadvantaged situation of the developing countries deprived their inhabitants of those benefits and, consequently, of the possibility of enriching their culture and knowledge. Mongolia favoured a new

world information and communications order based on a free and balanced flow of information accessible to the people of the entire world.

9. DPI played an important role in disseminating objective information on world problems and United Nations activities. His delegation agreed that the Department should be restructured with a view to reorienting United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications and introducing modern media such as the Web-based United Nations news service. It also attached importance to the Under-Secretary-General's new outreach strategy for the Department, which involved partnerships with organizations of civil society throughout the world. He also highlighted the importance of rapid delivery of news to the global media, which continuously disseminated information about United Nations activities in response to world problems.

10. While recognizing the effectiveness of the modern media, he wished to stress the importance of the traditional information media. He welcomed the measures taken to strengthen the international radio broadcasting capacity of the United Nations and believed that the Department should also reflect the great variety of United Nations activities in its television programmes and disseminate more information on peacekeeping operations, especially in the countries in conflict, so that people could better understand the objectives of those operations.

11. He hoped that the necessary funds would be allocated in the proposed budget for the biennium 2000-2001 so that the Department could fulfil its mandate.

12. Referring to DPI publications, he noted with satisfaction that the publication *Discovering the UN* had been translated into Mongolian and had been made available to participants in a seminar held in Mongolia in June 1999.

13. His delegation supported the proposals, recommendations and draft resolutions contained in the report of the Committee on Information.

14. **Mr. Elgharari** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) supported the statements made on behalf of the Arab Group and the Group of 77 and China. Referring to the globalization of information, he emphasized the importance of establishing a new, equitable and balanced world information order that would permit the free flow of information throughout the world and provide for new machinery to strengthen cultural relations among peoples and break the monopoly on science and knowledge, which should belong to all humanity. When a few countries controlled the modern communications media through their technological progress, information became a dangerous instrument since it was used to impose foreign values and sometimes to distort the truth about certain States; his country had had direct experience of that for some time. The United Nations was playing an increasingly important role in the maintenance of peace and the settlement of conflicts, although the great Powers were trying to sweep it aside. Consequently, there was a need to improve the Organization's image and to proceed with the current reform, avoiding the hegemony of the great Powers. To that end it was essential to strengthen DPI, especially with regard to information on disarmament and the danger of small arms, prior to the conference to be held in 2001.

15. His delegation would like to see Arabic used more frequently in the electronic transmission of United Nations information and in official documents. Stressing the importance of the traditional news media, he said that be supported the broadcasting of United Nations information in the six official languages and especially in Arabic.

16. His delegation supported the Department's efforts to train the journalists of developing countries, respected the role played by United Nations information centres in the various countries and recalled that his country had been funding the centre in Tripoli for the past 20 years.

17. **Ms. Khanam** (Bangladesh) supported the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China but stressed that it was important that the various bodies involved in public information activities should adopt a coherent and results-oriented approach. Her country was concerned that, despite the expanded organizational structures, a sizeable percentage of the population of the developing countries was not fully aware of United Nations activities. DPI had failed to achieve the goals it had set itself because it had focused on the developed countries and paid little attention to the developing world; the integration of United Nations information centres with UNDP field offices in the name of financial austerity had also been a factor.

18. In order to promote a positive image of the United Nations, it was important to develop a new communications culture; accordingly, Bangladesh supported the increasing use of advanced technology, but not at the expense of the traditional media, which were still the main source of information in the developing countries.

19. In terms of the focus of DPI activities, she said that information about the United Nations should focus more on United Nations activities and accomplishments in the area of economic and social development. DPI should assist the developing countries in the information-related fields, particularly with regard to the training of journalists, and should collaborate more effectively with Governments to prepare study courses on United Nations activities. DPI press releases should focus more on the intergovernmental aspect of the work of the Organization rather than on the role of the Secretariat as had been the case thus far.

20. Her delegation supported the efforts to turn the Dag Hammarskjöld Library into a virtual library accessible electronically from any part of the world, but pointed out that there was still a need to acquire books and periodicals. Not only were fewer books being purchased but most of the books relating to peace and security were kept in the United Nations library in Geneva, causing obvious inconvenience to delegations that wished to consult them. She did not understand the rationale behind that policy. She urged DPI to remedy the situation promptly and called on the library to acquire more publications and periodicals from the developing countries.

21. In conclusion, she expressed serious concern at the integration process in general and at the status of integrated United Nations information centres in particular. For years, her delegation had been saying that the integration of the information centres with the UNDP field offices had been neither functionally efficient nor cost-effective. Clearly, the services provided by those centres had deteriorated drastically. The draft resolution adopted by the Committee on Information requested the Secretary-General to carry out a case-by-case review in consultation with the host Governments of the countries where those centres had been integrated. She wished to know when that review would be undertaken.

22. *Mr. Kazhura (Belarus), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

23. **Mr. Sai** (Algeria) said that the new millennium would bring an explosion of information and progress in technologies and communications. The technological revolution, together with the spread of computers and information, had reduced distances between peoples and transformed the world into a global village. That change, though beneficial, was cause for concern because it could further heighten the differences between developed and developing countries. Some 90 per cent of the world's news media belonged to the developed countries, a fact which enabled them to shape public opinion in a way that favoured their economic and political interests.

24. Considerable progress had been made in Algeria with regard to information and the multi-party system. In Algeria there were currently more than 28 dailies, as well as many periodicals and reviews, most of which belonged to the private sector. The State had given financial and political support to facilitate that trend and to promote dialogue between the press and readers.

25. He endorsed the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and hoped that it would give rise to a collective movement. While communications technology was extremely advanced, the fact was that television and the press continued to be important, especially in the developing countries, and must therefore be strengthened. He urged the Secretary-General and DPI to continue to give attention to those media and to respect linguistic diversity in the United Nations. Information, whether written or transmitted by radio, television or the Internet, should be disseminated in all languages and especially in Arabic.

26. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal) supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The world had become a global village thanks to the colossal progress achieved in communications, but inequalities of access to information and information technologies raised serious problems, especially for the developing countries. The international community should promote a new, more equitable world information order based on free circulation and broader and more balanced dissemination of information. In fact, for the majority of human beings to have access to information it was necessary to employ the traditional means of communication, especially radio, since television and

the press continued to be a luxury in the majority of the developing countries.

27. Senegal understood the importance of the new technologies; it had availed itself of all opportunities to improve the situation in that regard and urged the United Nations to improve the assistance provided to developing countries so that they could share in the benefits of the information age.

28. He welcomed United Nations efforts to improve its Web site and supported the creation of versions in the six official languages as soon as possible in order to attract new users. Among recent initiatives, it was important to note the participation of African journalists, including one Senegalese, in the information services of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

29. His Government supported the development of United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity and was considering how to contribute to the project but stressed the need to give the French section of the United Nations radio the means to better transmit information on the Organization's activities to the countries of Africa and the rest of the world.

30. **Mr. Ba-Isa** (Yemen) said that the growing interest in participating in the Committee on Information and the valuable contributions to the debates indicated the great importance which the international community attached to questions of information.

31. The technological revolution and the flow of information had transformed the world into a global village. The United Nations should disseminate cultural values and promote the cultural integration of peoples in order to contribute to the objectives of peace, disarmament and stability.

32. The developing countries were very much behind in the development of information technology and required scientific, technical and material assistance in order to develop their infrastructure and thereby to participate in that process.

33. It was encouraging to note the valuable work carried out by the United Nations information centres in organizing activities and disseminating information in the local languages in order to publicize the Organization's work. The centres could help in implementing the new communications strategy with the participation of the institutions of civil society. Despite the financial limitations, there was a definite need to give more support to the information centres. He highlighted the efforts of the communication and information centres in Yemen and said that it was necessary to appoint a director and to give the centres support so that they could carry out effectively the tasks entrusted to them.

34. Interest in maintaining and improving United Nations Web sites had been expressed. The Internet was an important instrument for projecting the Organization's image in the world, but there should be a balance among the languages used. Furthermore, it was necessary to bear in mind the need to maintain the traditional news media, which were more accessible in the developing countries.

35. **Mr. Winn** (Myanmar) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

36. Information and communication technologies were of vital importance if all countries were to keep pace with the rapid changes in the world. Myanmar supported the establishment of a new world information and communication order that would rectify the imbalances between the developed and the developing countries in the availability of information and the capacity to process it. To that end, it was essential to increase assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in the developing countries. His delegation welcomed measures taken to restructure DPI. Moreover, it supported the creation of a United Nations information strategy and considered that the Organization should focus on development issues.

37. While the Internet had been called the fourth medium for the dissemination of information, his delegation believed that the traditional media — such as radio, television and the press — would continue to be the primary media for many countries for the foreseeable future.

38. He commended DPI, especially for its training programme for media professionals from developing countries, and thanked it for facilitating the participation of an information official from Myanmar in that programme.

39. **Mr. Eguiguren** (Chile) said that his country associated itself with the statements made by the

representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group.

40. On 14 October, the representative of UNICEF in Burundi had been murdered together with an official of the World Food Programme and other nationals of that country. The representative, Luis Zúñiga, had been a Chilean citizen who, one month earlier, had broadcast a message to the Burundian nation urging the combatants to permit UNICEF to vaccinate children against polio. A three-day ceasefire had been achieved for that purpose. That was an example of the use of information for peaceful and humanitarian purposes.

41. Activities of that kind by United Nations humanitarian workers in general were not well known. Neither was it known to what extent news of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and declarations reached areas of conflict. The Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information had indicated the role which the Department should play in order to improve the Organization's communications and information capacity in the field. His Government considered that it was very important to continue studying that aspect and that the Committee on Information should participate in that study.

42. He agreed that it was necessary to revitalize the Committee on Information as a forum for discussion of public-information and communications strategies. One important aspect to be considered was how to bring the United Nations message of peace to areas of conflict.

43. **Mr. Zaagman** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, including the member States of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, said that freedom of information was of fundamental importance to all people. Communication, and particularly independent, pluralistic and free media, contributed to both democracy and development. Thus, it was shocking that many journalists continued to be imprisoned, intimidated and harassed throughout the world and that some of them were even killed because of their courage to defy all possible obstacles for the sake of keeping the world informed. The countries on behalf of which he spoke condemned the use of violence to silence journalists or otherwise obstruct their work.

44. The Western Group supported the work of the Committee on Information and hoped that, as in previous years, the Fourth Committee as a whole would endorse the recommendations submitted to it. The Group also welcomed the report of the Secretary-General's on questions relating to information (A/54/415 and Add.1), which provided a good overview of the Department's policies and strategies.

45. One of the most important United Nations activities was peacekeeping operations. The importance of the information segment in a peacekeeping mission was often underestimated. The mission's success could depend on the dissemination of adequate information to the local population and also to the world at large since public opinion could determine the level of support that the mission received.

46. He noted with satisfaction that DPI was now included in consultations and preparations at the earliest stages of peacekeeping and other field missions.

47. The United Nations needed to develop an effective communications strategy in order to meet the challenges of the information age. The Western Group therefore supported the Department's efforts to build partnerships with the various elements of civil society in order to increase public awareness of United Nations issues at every level of global society, mobilizing greater support and resources for the Organization.

48. In view of the budgetary constraints, the European Union encouraged the Department to focus its activities on the areas specified in draft resolution B and to continue to embrace the new technologies of electronic communication in order to increase efficiency in the publishing and dissemination of information.

49. The Group of Western European and Other States welcomed the development of the United Nations Web site and considered that the latter's improvement, based on the achievement of multilingual parity through a modular approach was the road to be taken.

50. **Mr. Vantsevich** (Belarus) said that after 50 years, the United Nations was undertaking a reform process to adapt its activities and methods to the new global situation. Reform of the public information system was an important factor in promoting the efficiency of the

United Nations. The Secretariat must endeavour to become more innovative and action-oriented in order to disseminate information on the many activities carried out in the fields of peace and security, sustainable economic development and human rights. He acknowledged the work of DPI in that area.

51. He welcomed the recommendation made in draft resolution B, approved by the Committee on Information at its twenty-first session, that, through its reorientation, DPI should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition. The image of the United Nations in the coming century would be largely dependent on the degree and extent to which the public and Member States understood the Organization's basic activities.

52. His Government attached great importance to the work carried out by the United Nations information centres and the information units of the United Nations field offices since those centres and units were a valuable and, in some cases, the only source at local level of reliable information on the Organization and its functions and were therefore extremely effective means of promoting a better understanding of those activities. In addition, those centres and units played a special role in disseminating information on the concrete problems encountered by the group of States with economies in transition and their efforts to achieve sustainable development in the economic and social fields. His Government had continually supported the steps taken to integrate the information centres with UNDP field offices since that would make it possible to better coordinate the use of financial resources, diversify the scope of information activities and increase the efficiency thereof. In taking decisions on that matter, the views of the Governments of beneficiary countries and conditions in the field must be taken into account.

53. His Government had decided to establish a United Nations House in its capital, Minsk, in order to bring all the Organization's funds and programmes carrying out operations in the country under one roof and thereby to increase the efficiency of those operations. That decision had been taken in light of the anticipated increase in the volume of work of the Minsk information centre and of the measures taken to promote the exchange of information between Member States of the Organization. Another example of fruitful cooperation between Belarus and the United Nations in the field of information was the recent opening of a second depository library as part of the main library of the State University of Belarus; that had been made possible through technical and material assistance provided by the UNDP office in Minsk, especially its information unit, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. An Internet-linked computer network had been set up in the new depository library in order to give users easy access to United Nations Web sites and the optical disk system.

54. Belarus had suffered from the harmful effects of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and therefore acknowledged the usefulness of the efforts made by DPI and other bodies of the United Nations system to disseminate information on the situation that had existed since the accident. There was a continued need to investigate and divulge balanced, detailed information on the technical aspects of that disaster and on its impact on health and the environment. His Government welcomed the establishment of a special section of the United Nations Web page with information on Chernobyl.

55. Furthermore, his Government was following with particular interest the Department's efforts to implement the pilot project for the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations and supported the Committee on Information's request at its twenty-first session that DPI should launch that pilot project as soon as possible by contacting interested Member States and specialized agencies to seek the assistance necessary to the success of that project. Belarus would also participate actively in efforts to obtain the resources necessary to its implementation.

56. **Mr. Tekaya** (Tunisia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made at an earlier meeting by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

57. In recent years, technological advances in the information and communications sector had been impressive and had had very varied repercussions in various spheres, including economic and trade relations throughout the world. Ideas circulated more rapidly, yet the disparities between the developing and developed countries, including the differences in their technological capacities in the information and communications sector, continued to grow. Those

disparities could be reduced only through understanding, cooperation, solidarity and partnership. The United Nations had an important function in that regard, especially in terms of international cooperation and provision of assistance to developing countries in order to enhance their capacity in the communications sector. The Organization should conduct its work more effectively in order to place information at the service of international peace and security. In providing such assistance, it should bear in mind the specific priorities and requirements of each of the recipient countries.

58. Tunisia had given an important place in its policies to questions relating to information because of their importance for the strengthening of freedom of expression and democracy and for economic and social development. Tunisia had prepared a broad plan to promote use of the most advanced technologies in the communications sector, establish the necessary infrastructure and provide that sector with the appropriate legal framework. Furthermore, it had adopted a set of measures to promote investment in information services. For example, during the previous week, the first Week of the Internet had been observed in Tunisia; exhibitions and other activities had been held in various parts of the country to promote awareness of those questions.

59. He commended the work of DPI aimed at harnessing modern communications technologies, including the Internet, in order to strengthen United Nations capacity to disseminate its message with the necessary speed and effectiveness. While encouraging those initiatives, Tunisia held the view that the traditional means of information continued to be very important, especially for mobilizing world public opinion in support of the principles and purposes of the United Nations. It was necessary to continue to support those traditional means of information and to allocate sufficient resources to those tasks.

60. The United Nations information centres fulfilled a very important function in publicizing the Organization's activities. Tunisia hoped that maximum priority would be given to the task of preserving and strengthening the structure of those centres. Integration of the centres with the UNDP field offices, mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report, was encountering difficulties in certain countries. The Committee on Information had also considered that question at its twenty-first session and had drawn attention to the need to find a solution. He reiterated that the situation should be resolved in accordance with the pertinent General Assembly resolutions, on a case-by-case basis and bearing in mind the views of the country in question.

61. Lastly, he noted that, at its resumed twenty-first session, the Committee on Information had considered the question of developing United Nations Web sites in all the official languages and had recommended that the General Assembly should invite the Secretary-General to submit proposals with a view to attaining that objective. He stressed the continuing importance of giving equitable treatment to all the official languages.

62. **Mr. Radolf** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that at the dawn of the third millennium, the principles and ideals proclaimed in the UNESCO Charter, especially the free flow of ideas, equal opportunity for education for all, the propagation of knowledge and access by all people to the material published by any of them, took on special relevance and even a determining value.

63. The UNESCO communications strategy, formulated in 1989, was coming to the fore in the current planetary discussions on knowledge transfer, new technologies and the Internet. The object of that strategy was to encourage the free flow of information at the international and national levels, to promote the wider and better-balanced dissemination of information, without any obstacle to freedom of expression, and to strengthen communication capacities in the developing countries in order to increase their participation in the communication process.

64. UNESCO had raised funds for communication training and infrastructure through the International Programme for the Development of Communication. UNESCO initiatives in community radio, rural newspapers, public-service radio and television, regional and national news agencies, computer-generated cartoons and documentaries and youth- and women-oriented communications projects to combat AIDS, were well known. The most crucial problem to resolve, however, remained that of the deepening chasm that separated those who increasingly determined the destinies of peoples — those who owned and managed the technologies of the information society —from those who had thus far been excluded and who accounted for over 90 per cent of the world population. That imbalance was reflected

in the use of the Internet, the oligopolies that controlled the planet's electronic commerce, current problems relating to intellectual property, the protection of privacy and personal information and the defence of freedom of expression on the Internet.

65. Faced with those challenges, the question arose as to whether the United Nations system, and particularly UNESCO, in close cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union, had any special role to fulfil. First, there was a need for planetary-level agreements to guide communication and telecommunication policies aimed at harmonizing international tariffs and levelling the current systems of taxing communication flows that were intrinsically international and, by so doing, to help democratize the redistribution of those resources. Second, UNESCO had a special responsibility to protect and promote the world public domain of intellectual property, both material and non-material, and to be vigilant and sensitive to the ethical and social dimensions of operating on the Internet or any new form of electronic communication. Third, there was a need to strengthen the ability of the United Nations system to provide an intellectual forum for discussion of the social, ethical and developmental dimensions of new communication technologies and to ensure the system's capacity to respond to the development demands of member States through organs such as the International Programme for the Development of Communication.

66. The ultimate objective of those strategies was to ensure the inviolability of the intellectual content as potential national resources transmitted by the new technologies. National content on the information highway was not merely a heritage for social, cultural and intellectual development: it also represented the nation's basic "information capital" from which a vast array of value-added products could be derived. In order to benefit widely from the national content, a basic requirement was to promote a dynamic world electronic public domain, including information produced with public funds, classical and traditional works not covered by copyright, and other works such as scientific literature and freeware computer programmes which fell into special not-for-profit domains. A meaningful public domain could be created only if each country produced content and applications in its languages and sensitive to its specific national and ethnic cultures.

67. **The Chairman**, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX), invited the Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to make a statement before the Committee.

68. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)), said that the item under discussion was of paramount importance given the rapid developments in communication technologies, particularly through the Internet; the label "Information Age" given to the start of the new millennium was most apt. Those rapid developments called for a new approach to Islamic information in order to keep up with those changes in accordance with the spirit of Islam and its noble values and to establish an effective, well-developed information system.

69. The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers at its twenty-sixth session, held in Burkina Faso from 20 June to 1 July 1999, had called for the implementation of the Islamic Program for Development of Information and Communication. That programme was aimed at developing, establishing and supporting the infrastructure of the various information and communication sectors with a view to enhancing their contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of the 56 States members of OIC.

70. He emphasized the cooperation between OIC, UNESCO and ITU and the efforts made by the OIC General Secretariat, the Al-Quds Committee, the Islamic Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs and other OIC bodies. Two specialized institutions of OIC, namely the International Islamic News Agency and the Islamic States Broadcasting Organization, were adopting a new methodology that kept abreast of modern transformations generated by new information and communication technologies. With that methodology, those institutions desired to counter the ever-increasing challenges in the information domain, such as campaigns aimed at obliterating the Islamic identity of the peoples of the OIC countries and distorting their beliefs.

71. With regard to the role of the United Nations in the sphere of information and communication, he drew attention first to the need for efforts to narrow the gap between the developed and the developing countries in the communications field in order to enable the latter to acquire more advanced means of communication, preserve national sovereignty and cultural identity and participate in the free and balanced exchange of

information. Second, he drew attention to the need for continued development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations Web sites with a view to achieving equal treatment of the six official languages, including Arabic, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/208 C, and the need for DPI to continue its activities in the field of publications, radio and television services and the United Nations libraries. Third, he expressed support for the suggestion that a Web page dedicated to dialogue among civilizations should be developed. Fourth, he stressed the need for DPI to continue its special information programme on the question of Palestine and to extend its assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development and the promotion of the Bethlehem 2000 project. In that regard, he said that in order to take its place in the information and communication field, the Organization of the Islamic Conference looked forward to enhancing and strengthening its cooperation with the United Nations. The secretariats of the two organizations and their affiliates would discuss that issue and others at their coordination meeting, to be held in Geneva in the year 2000.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.